



# **Cooperation**

## **Co-opPower: Empowering Communities**

Energy cooperatives are serving 31  
million people in the U.S.A.

**North East Victoria Energy Purchasing Group**

**2000**

# **What is an energy cooperative?**

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**An energy cooperative is a business established to provide reliable, at-cost energy service to its consumer members who are the owners of the business.**

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**An energy co-operative is two things: an energy business and a cooperative.**

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## **Cooperation**

**Member ownership and control of a co-operative is all about people working together to provide a service or product to meet a common goal.**

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**There are more than 2000  
cooperative businesses of many  
different types throughout  
Australia owned by their  
members. In the U.S.A. there  
are nearly 50,000 co-operatives.**

# Cooperation

## When people cooperate.

- Farmers unite as cooperatives to market their products
- Parents get together to form childcare cooperatives
- Neighbors join together to provide services through cooperatives

All are doing together what they could not accomplish individually

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**An energy co-op looks like any other utility, with wires and poles or pipes, equipment and trucks...but being a cooperative makes it distinctly different because the consumer members control the assets and operations through member adopted rules.**



# **Cooperation**

**The board, the manager and the employees are all charged with the responsibility of giving voice to the members.**

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# Cooperation

- The co-op reports to the members...
- Holds an annual meeting...
- Sends out publications...
- Meets one-to-one with customers.

to keep its member owners up to date,  
and give opportunity for member input  
and, ultimately, control.

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**In the USA there are 934 energy cooperatives representing the largest electric utility network in the United States with combined assets of \$US69 billion, employing more than 61,000 people and owned by 12 million members.**

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**There are two energy co-operatives in Victoria – Co-operative Energy Ltd and Southern Energy Co-operative Ltd. There is also Co-operative Purchasing Services Ltd.**

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# **Cooperation**

**In Victoria Co-operative Energy Ltd is working with councils in North East Victoria and Gateway BEET in North West Victoria. Co-operative Energy Ltd is committed to giving cooperatives a voice and protecting consumers as the energy industry is deregulated.**

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**Co-operatives are the fastest growing form of electric utility in the USA - adding three times the number of customers as the industry as a whole.**

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## **Cooperation**

**Most of these energy co-ops in the USA are electric distribution and retail co-ops and some are electric generation and transmission cooperatives. Increasing numbers of these co-operatives are also involved in gas, water & wastewater distribution and retailing.**

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**New energy cooperatives are forming in the U.S.A. to take advantage of “the power of many.” We have the same challenge and opportunity in Victoria.**



## **Cooperation**

**New energy purchasing  
cooperatives in the U.S.A. and  
Australia represent organizations  
or individuals that combine forces  
to negotiate and buy energy  
services.**

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# **Cooperation**

**In the USA they range from California fruit growers to housing co-operatives in Manhattan. The co-op way of doing business is booming! It can also boom in Victoria if we accept that the co-operative way is the best way – that dependence on changing governments and their policies is not enough.**

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**Cooperation**

**There's more to an energy co-operative than words can convey. The co-operative spirit makes an energy utility unique.**

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**Cooperation**

**It's all about you and me. We own it. We use it. We pay its bills, and we share the profits.**

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# **Cooperation**

**People like the co-operative idea. Research in the U.S.A. reveals that the concept of an organization dedicated to the common goal of its users is very appealing.**

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**In fact, the more people know about co-ops, the more they like co-ops. In Victoria, however, we're more focused on changing and regulating investor-owned companies – ignoring the co-operative history and presence.**

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# **Cooperation**

**Members of co-operatives in the U.S.A. and Australia like having a voice, and they like the local community ownership and involvement that cooperatives foster. Of course, there are critics of co-operatives – experts who oppose economic democracy.**

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**In Victoria we need to rediscover our past and present – the forgotten role of co-operatives in empowering individuals and their communities.**

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# **Cooperation**

**An energy co-operative works for us. It takes our concerns and gives us a voice in energy needs and issues. We have no voice with investor-owned companies. We are the objects of their surveys and focus groups.**

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**It's people and service — not profit — which drive energy co-operatives. Co-ops are people-centred businesses. This is the co-operative essence. It is not a marketing ploy to capture and retain consumers.**

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**Cooperation**

**Your co-op is made up of  
people...from employees who  
work at it every day, to the board  
members you elect to serve you.**

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**Cooperation**

**It's personal...  
a spirit,  
and...**

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**Cooperation**

**Things happen when  
people co-operate.**

**Do we dare to co-  
operate?**

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